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## SUCCESS STORY

### Vocational Training Graduate Opens Her Own Business

#### Young Women in Chechnya Find Independence Thanks to Vocational Training



[Photo: Nerys Bannister]

*Birlant looks after a satisfied customer in her salon in Urus-Martan, Chechnya. Using the practical skills she learnt on a vocational training course, run by IRC and its local partner, supported by USAID, Birlant is now able to support her family of seven.*

**To date over 500 people in Chechnya and Dagestan have taken part in the USAID-funded project VPERYED! (Go For It!).**

**Providing vocational training and business development support, the project is implemented by IRC in partnership with World Vision, Patriot and Modern Humanitarian Academy.**

In Chechnya they say “Every man wants to receive food from a beautiful hand” – and so the logic follows that a good manicurist will always have work. This wisdom, coupled with entrepreneurial spirit is seeing young women in the war ravaged republic start to dig themselves and their families out of poverty.

Birlant is 29 years old and has been working as a manicurist in her own salon for two weeks, after graduating from a vocational training course run by IRC and its partner organization, Patriot, with the support of USAID, in the district of Urus-Martan, about 30 km from the capital, Grozny. Previously the only income in Birlant’s family of seven was her mother’s small pension along with what little Birlant was able to make working at the local market; the family having lost most of their possessions during the second Chechen war.

“I always enjoyed giving my friends manicures and so when I heard about the chance to study to become a professional manicurist I leaped at the chance” Birlant says. She explains that she could have never afforded to do the course privately, plus she would have had little opportunity to practice and no recognized qualification at the end.

Impressing the tutors with her drive and commitment, Birlant successfully gained a place on the manicurist course. While honing her skills in class, she decided that she would like to set up her own salon. She sold her jewelry to rent a room at the back of a clothes store and in her time away from class carried out renovations and set up equipment to turn the little room into a salon. Birlant even secured the services of another student, Milana, studying hairdressing with IRC, to work in the salon.

Two weeks in and the business is making 1,500 Rubles, about \$60 a day, and already seeing repeat customers. Indira lives in Grozny but happened to use Birlant’s salon when she was in Urus-Martan one day. She says she was so happy with the quality of Birlant’s work that she has made the journey from Grozny again especially to receive a manicure from Birlant.

Encouraged by her success Birlant has more plans for her business; she’s launching an advertising campaign and planning to have a cosmetologist join the salon to increase business. What is most exciting for Birlant is the difference the income from her salon makes to her family and the pride she feels in this: “I feel wonderful. I am independent and I can help my family, I am equal to anyone.”